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Secretary Baker

Current
Policy
No. 1170

The Challenge of Change in U.S.-Soviet Relations

United States Department of State
Bureau of Public Affairs
Washington, D.C.

Following is an address by Secretary Baker before the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), Washington, D.C., May 4, 1989.

I am honored to once again be here at the CSIS. Ever since its founding, I think this center has combined an understanding of international problems with a vigorous debate over how America should conduct its foreign policy. Those of us who have been privileged to serve this nation in one capacity or another—to serve this nation abroad or to participate in the formation of policy here at home—know full well the ardors of this task. We know, too, that assessments of reality are not enough. Judgments and words ultimately have to be turned into action if we are going to serve the public interest.

A Time of Change

The assessment of reality has become more difficult in today's world because the pace of international change has accelerated considerably. Some years ago, I happened across a scholarly study of the late 18th century entitled *The Age of Revolutions*, and perhaps one day historians might describe our times the same way.

Just consider for a moment, if you will, some of the trends which are transforming our world. Democracy, an idea and political system challenged for much of the postwar era, really is on the offensive. Millions of people in our own hemisphere and in countries such as the Philippines and Korea have achieved, now, democratic governments. Millions elsewhere—in Eastern Europe, in the Soviet Union, and in the People's Republic of China—are demanding free institutions in a way that we've never seen before. So I think it is fair to say that the quest for democracy is the most vibrant political fact of these times.

Another great transformation that we are seeing is economic. Free markets, private initiative have become the new watchwords of economic development because those concepts work — and we know this very well now— actually work in practice. And closely allied to economic change is technological progress. The new technologies of information and communication have helped to create a global economy, an economy which transcends the traditional boundaries of the nation state.

There have been other transformations as well. Emerging technologies open new horizons, I think, for greater military stability. Other trends, though, such as the proliferation of chemical weapons and missiles—as David [Ambassador David Abshire, CSIS president] mentioned to you— the proliferation of those weapons to volatile regions and to irresponsible states present us with greater dangers.

And while we struggle to deal with traditional political and military problems, I think we all must become increasingly aware of new transnational threats—threats such as environmental hazards, terrorism, the drug trade— that demand greater and greater international cooperation if they are going to be properly addressed.

Every nation has been affected in one way or another by these transformations. And, as a consequence, really no international relationship has remained the same. This, of course, is especially true of U.S.-Soviet relations. The result, I think, is a rare opportunity—a chance to transform our attitudes, our words, and, above all, our actions toward each other for the better. But this opportunity is also—and I think David touched on this as well—at the same time, a challenge—a challenge to understand first what is happening, and secondly, why and how to seize the opportunity for progress toward a freer and more peaceful international community.

The Promise of *Perestroika* in the Soviet Union

The challenge of change in U.S.-Soviet relations begins, I think, with change—fundamental change—in the Soviet Union. For nearly half a century now, we and our allies have confronted a Soviet superpower along the great fault lines of the postwar period. This struggle has been rooted in two profoundly different visions—the democratic vision and the communist vision. We differ over the rights of the individual; we differ over the power of the state; we differ over the rule of law, the use of force, the role of religion. In

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short, we differ over what we consider to be the basic values of society.

While we may have erred from time to time, on the whole, I think it's fair to say that we in the West have been very, very faithful to our vision. Great sacrifices have been made. The burdens were—and, indeed, the burdens still are sometimes—very difficult to bear. There were, and there always will be, risks. But we upheld our values. And we prevented for 40 years war in Europe.

Surely, some of the change we see now in the Soviet Union is a consequence of our success. There would be no quest for democratic institutions if democratic institutions had failed. There would be less soul-searching of the communist vision if the democratic vision had somehow faded or disappeared. And an alliance of free nations, working together, sharing risks and responsibilities while pursuing freedom and extending economic progress, has always, I think, offered a rather convincing alternative.

I think it can also be said, however, that the dramatic changes which are sweeping the Soviet Union are not due simply to Western fortitude. It is also the failure of the communist vision to produce results, judged by its own standards, that inspires calls for *perestroika*. It is the fear that outdated dogma and unworkable institutions will leave Soviet society behind—isolated from technological progress and the global economy—that really accelerates reform in the Soviet Union. And just as surely, change is motivated also by the belief of some in the Soviet Union that revolutions have a tough time living by slogans alone.

The President has said and I have said that we have absolutely no wish to see *perestroika* fail. To the contrary, we would very much like it to succeed. And that achievement could have great international effect.

As Foreign Minister Shevardnadze told the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and I quote, ". . . we must labor solidly to convince the people that we are thinking first and foremost about their interests. . . . We are aware of and declare the truth that foreign policy cannot be divorced from domestic realities." A process that promises to increase the freedom and improve the well-being of the Soviet peoples really is in everyone's interest. A process that promises to change Soviet international behavior toward diplomatic solutions and problemsolving, rather than the use of force or intimidation, I think offers hope for a radically improved international order.

That's why we've been so encouraged by the words and the concepts of what General Secretary Gorbachev refers to as the "new thinking." And in a number of places, I think it's fair to say that words have turned into realities. The General Secretary pledged that Soviet troops would leave Afghanistan on February 15, and they did. He signed the INF [Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces] Treaty, and SS–20s are being destroyed. Last December, he announced unilateral troop cuts in Europe, and now we've seen Soviet tanks leaving Hungary. Soon we hope to see them destroyed.

The Soviets have begun releasing political prisoners. And, as we all know, great strides have been made in permitting freer emigration. Most importantly, the Soviets now talk of enforcing the rule of law and other guarantees of individual rights which are very, very familiar and very basic to us in the West. Limited elections have taken place. The growing dissatisfaction with the Soviet system and pressure for change is unmistakable, and it is widespread.

Words of hope are, indeed, not limited just to the Soviet Union. In Poland, the free labor union Solidarity has been legalized following unprecedented roundtable agreements. And in Hungary, the mechanics of a multiparty system are actively being considered.

In the economic sphere as well, the spread of private ownership, cooperatives, and decentralization of power creates some promising opportunities. Soon we may see the Soviets move forward to join the global economy. I think we would welcome, and welcome strongly, a Soviet economy open to world markets with a freely convertible ruble.

We also recognize, however, that in this critical area, as in many others, there are many hard choices to be made. It is far too early for us to know, of course, whether *perestroika* will or will not succeed. But it begins and it ends with the people of the Soviet Union, and they will determine whether it succeeds or whether it fails.

New Thinking and Old Habits

These great changes, however, are not the only realities of the Soviet Union today. There is an uneasy and, I might add, a not always peaceful coexistence between the slogans of the new thinking and the reality of both Soviet capabilities and Soviet actions. We must all, I think, face the fact that the Soviets continue to pose a significant military threat to Western interests. Even after the unilateral Soviet reductions in Europe take place, the Warsaw Pact would retain a two-to-one edge in tanks and artillery. At a time when we hear talk of unilateral reductions, of the need to cut defense spending, and of the necessity to transfer precious resources from the military economy to the civilian sector, 3,500—that's right, 3,500—new Soviet tanks continue to roll off the production lines each year. That happens to be a production rate five times greater than our own.

For all the talk of "defensive defense," Soviet military exercises still continue to show a marked inclination for taking the offensive. For all the talk of openness, the Soviets have yet to publish a real defense budget—a budget that would reveal what the Soviets really are spending on defense; a budget that would provide a guide to Soviet defense production; a budget, in effect, that would show the direction of future Soviet defense plans. If they were to publish such a budget, I think we could then evaluate the Soviet pledge to cut their defense budget by 14%, and we could measure its impact. Indeed, we challenge them to present such a budget and to publish openly, as we do, the details of their worldwide forces and deployments.

For all of the talk of a common European home—and we hear a lot of that now—the European house remains divided by Soviet force. If there is ever to be a true "common European house," the Soviets must no longer prevent the residents from moving from room to room. But, today, the Wall still stands, and the Brezhnev doctrine remains unrenounced.

Unfortunately, there are still many regions where the new thinking has yet to take root. We still see—and we've mentioned this from time to time—many signs of the old thoughts and the old actions in Central America where the Soviets sent over $500 million in military aid to the Sandinistas just last year. In the Middle East, long-range bombers have just been sent to Qadhafi. In Korea, the heavily fortified North—supported by Soviet arms and aid—still threatens the South. And in the Far East, of course, the Soviets continue their occupation of Japan's Northern Territories.

An Active Agenda

So the reality of Soviet change, as I have described it from both sides, I think, is both promising and problematic. How do we address the very

serious difficulties remaining on the agenda, while giving due credit to the remarkable progress that has been made in the past few years?

There are some who say that we don't need to do much of anything because trends are so favorable to us. Their counsel is to sit tight and simply await further Soviet concessions.

I don't happen to be of this school. I don't think we can be passive in the face of these great strategic changes, nor can we simply yield the initiative to a Soviet agenda that may not reflect the best interests of the West. Our foreign policy has to be based on an understanding of change in the Soviet Union, but it cannot wholly rely on that change to produce the results that we want.

Our actions, of course, will play an important role in shaping the future of U.S.-Soviet relations. Our policy has got to be to press forward with our agenda, to test the application of Soviet new thinking again and again.

In areas such as human rights and arms control, much progress has been made, and a framework for diplomatic exchange and negotiations already exists. Our purpose here, I think, should be to institutionalize these changes to make them, if we can, more difficult to reverse. And we want both Soviet intentions and capabilities to become more transparent.

Building Upon Past Successes: Human Rights and Arms Control

Human rights will always head the list. As a democracy, of course, we could not do otherwise and still be true to our own values. We will always be concerned about how the Soviet Union and the governments in Eastern Europe treat their own citizens. That is important not only for humanitarian reasons, but also because we believe that a government's treatment of its own people is a good measure of how it will treat other states.

We are encouraged by recent Soviet performance with respect to human rights and democratization, and we hope to see these changes become a permanent part of the Soviets' legal system and political code. By expressing these hopes, we seek not to interfere in Soviet affairs but only to see the fulfillment of the promises once made by the Soviet Union when it signed the Helsinki accords. These promises were, after all, reiterated by General Secretary Gorbachev at the United Nations as recently as December.

We shall also continue with the existing arms control framework because it serves our objectives of stable deterrence at lower levels of arms and risk. We intend to preserve and to strengthen this framework. Indeed, the United States will soon suggest a date for the resumption of the strategic arms talks. The talks on conventional forces in Europe and confidence-building measures that began in Vienna last month, I think, can contribute substantially to our objectives of deterrence at lower levels of force. These give us a forum to challenge the Soviets and their allies to come clean on the true level and nature of their forces and to engage in careful reductions that diminish the threat to the West. As I said in Vienna, current force levels and structure in Europe are not engraved in stone.

Broadening the Foundation for the Future

But the challenge of change cannot stop there. Indeed, new thinking in Soviet foreign policy gives us a unique opportunity to take Moscow at its word—take it at its word—across all areas of U.S.-Soviet relations. Are the Soviets willing to live up to the promise of their rhetoric? Are the Soviets really prepared to recognize the constraints of an interdependent world? Is Moscow really ready to abandon the quest for unilateral gain? Can military confrontation really be replaced by political dialogue and even by cooperation? Will the slogans of new thinking be translated into enduring action?

The only way to answer these questions is to test the new thinking on issues that go beyond the recent intense focus on human rights and arms control. We face new threats and new challenges in regional conflicts, in the proliferation of advanced weapons, and in pressing transnational issues.

By testing Moscow across the board, we have the opportunity to turn many of the opportunities presented by the new thinking into reality. We can establish frameworks and baselines for common dialogue in areas where no real dialogue or basis for cooperation exists today. We can see whether the new thinking is real once we probe beyond the slogans. We can help fill the new thinking with content, and we can take advantage of change in the Soviet Union to achieve a new level of cooperation and international stability. And we can also, while we're at it, determine where the old thinking still holds force.

Let me, if I might, be just a bit more specific.

First, we will focus on regional conflicts, a significant source of East-West and international tension in the postwar period. While the Soviet Union has not necessarily been the cause of these conflicts, too often Soviet military aid and diplomacy have impeded the search for solutions and have even sometimes encouraged the violence. Now is the time to engage the Soviet Union in a serious dialogue to determine whether such policies really have changed. And the slogans of new thinking must be given content for this dialogue to work.

The Soviets have got to understand that their inclusion in the important process of resolving regional disputes requires them to act responsibly and not just to make high-profile assertions about a peace-loving intent. Establishing a basis for cooperation depends not on a Soviet commitment to vague generalities of peace but to the responsible behavior that will, in fact, make peace possible.

There can be little doubt that the proliferation of advanced weapons around the globe creates a strong need, and it creates a greater urgency, to develop a common framework for resolving regional disputes. Regional wars are unlikely to remain limited for very long. Rather, they are likely to escalate quickly, drawing us into conflicts that we should have helped to resolve in the first place.

Second, in the areas of ballistic missile and chemical weapons proliferation, we have only begun to establish new international rules addressing these problems—rules to which the Soviets have not, as yet, agreed. It will be an objective of mine in Moscow next week to determine whether we might develop a framework for working together to control a phenomenon which threatens us all.

Third, we will approach the Soviets on transnational issues, particularly the problems of the environment, which do not respect national boundaries. Pollution, drugs, and terrorism are all issues that should join, not separate, the Soviet Union and the United States. These are new testing grounds for our ability to work together. I believe that we can discover whether the Soviet Union seriously understands the need to deal with such issues, or whether it is prepared to pretend that old thinking will somehow isolate Moscow from the consequences.

Meeting the Challenge of Change

I'd like to conclude on a note of historical perspective. Students of American-Soviet relations are familiar with De Tocqueville's famous prophecy that the world would eventually be dominated by the United States and the Russian Empire—the one based on freedom, the other based on a denial of freedom. That prophecy very nearly came to pass. But in my view, a wise American diplomacy prevented it. An important part of our vision was the rejection of a condominium, of a division of the world according to spheres of influence. Instead, we sought to build up our allies, to assemble a coalition of free nations—free to seek their own destiny however they wished, just as our citizens are free to develop their own individual talents.

Now we are living in a time when these Western values are in the ascendancy, when our allies have become strong and, for the most part, prosperous. This changing world has challenged the Soviet Union. It is a challenge that the Soviet Union, acting in its own interests, has tried to meet through *perestroika*. Yes, we have heard claims of new thinking, and we have seen some of it translated into action. And we are saying to the Soviet Union: Let us continue. Free people can work together peacefully, linked by a common destiny. Let us deal, therefore, with the new problems of a different era guided by a vision of a free and peaceful world.■

Published by the United States Department of State • Bureau of Public Affairs
Office of Public Communication • Editorial Division • Washington, D.C. • May 1989
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